

# GREENWorks

## Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

September 2009

### **Pollution Prevention – Raising the Bar Beyond Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

Recycling is a habit for many of us – getting those bottles and cans, cardboard and paper to the curbside or transfer station is a part of our routine. And reusing that jar or using the blank side of paper for notes is, well, down right Yankee! In fact, what true Yankee wouldn't think it wise to use less where ever possible? Want to do more? To be better environmental citizens we need to move beyond recycling and reuse to *pollution prevention*. This concept was introduced in 1990 by the U.S. EPA with the deceptively simple statement, "Pollution should be prevented or reduced at the source whenever feasible."

If pollution isn't generated, it doesn't create a problem for our air, water or land, and we don't impact current or future generations. Pollution prevention was originally aimed at businesses that sought non-toxic substitutes and process changes to eliminate waste, but private citizens can also consider pollution prevention as their next step beyond recycling.

#### **Strategies for pollution prevention at home**

From lawn care to cleaning products to our everyday habits, there's a lot we can do to prevent products from becoming pollution. Plug-in air fresheners, scented sprays, dryer sheets and detergents all contain chemicals that can actually harm the environment. The best way to freshen air is to open a window and the smell of air-dried sheets can't be matched!

Instead of using a host of chemicals to manage garden pests and weeds, stop and think, "Is the pest really a pest?" Ninety percent of all insects are beneficial. Is the infestation minor enough to be ignored? If not, can the pest be denied access, food, harborage or water? If nothing else works, look for "green" solutions like planting marigolds to ward off insects or using a soap solution in place of a pesticide spray.

Consumers can also practice pollution prevention in their everyday activities. Every time we choose to walk instead of drive, it reduces pollution, putting fewer emissions into the air and conserving gas and oil. Every time you take the stairs instead of an elevator, or use a manual door rather than an automatic door, you save energy and the associated emissions from the power plants that produce that energy. Not to mention, we can all benefit from the exercise as well!

Consider pollution prevention in product purchases as well. Do you know if the products you purchase contain toxic materials? If so, is there a non-toxic alternative? Pollution prevention requires some thought, but is certainly a worthy endeavor in our efforts to ensure that the environment is healthy for our children and grandchildren.

If you need further assistance in pollution prevention products, techniques or alternatives, visit the DES webpage for a wealth of information. Or you can e-mail the Pollution Prevention Program to answer life's environmental conundrums ([nhppp@des.nh.gov](mailto:nhppp@des.nh.gov)).